

Holman Island

NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES



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POLARPAM

FORMATION

HOLMAN ISLAND

Holman Island has got to be one of the most charming settlements of the entire Canadian Arctic. Clumps of black rock, trimmed with bright white snow-cap borders, rise in small plateaus facing the sea. In summer white tents dot the beach, and the people are busy--working out of sealing boats, walking out on the tundra, or scurrying to meet the plane that lands right amidst their colourful pre-fab homes.

The settlement is located 70° 44' North Latitude, 117° 47' West Longitude, on the west side of Victoria Island. It is about 200 miles north of Coppermine and about 1200 miles north of Edmonton, Alberta. The settlement of Holman Island is actually not situated on an island at all, but on the shores of Queen's Bay, a small inlet of Amundsen Gulf on Victoria Island.

The best time to visit a settlement this far north is in May and June. At that time of the year the community seems to be alive twenty-four hours a day. After a winter of darkness everyone is reluctant to sleep while the midnight sun still shines. It is not every tourist who can return to his home with a "midnight suntan".

The dress of the Eskimos in this area is quite distinctive. Women and children wear home-made western-style parkas in bright floral prints, and the hoods are completely encircled with two layers of fur trim.

HISTORY

Before 1920, the Eskimos of Victoria Island had only sporadic contact with whites. Victoria Island was first sighted in 1826 by Dr. Richardson's portion of the 1825 Franklin expedition, and was named Wollaston Land. Late nineteenth century whalers seldom ventured as far east as Victoria Island. In 1911 Stefansson visited the Eskimos on Victoria Island.

The Hudson's Bay Company built the first trading post on Victoria Island in 1920. In 1938 the Hudson's Bay Company bought out the Canalaska trading company, and a year later consolidated its operations by establishing a post at Holman and shutting down many other posts in the north. In 1939 a Roman Catholic Mission was established at Holman, and many eskimos were attracted to settle there.

Over the decades fur trapping declined as an important economic factor. This is reflected in the abandonment of fur-rich Read Island in 1962. Trappers from that area then moved to Holman Island.

Over the past decade the settlement has expanded and changed a great deal. In April 1961 the Holman Eskimo Co-operative was incorporated, and has since become a booming success. In 1963 an Anglican missionary was posted at Holman. In 1964 a two-room school was built by the Department of Northern Affairs. In 1965 the school principal began to act as Government Administrator as well. In 1966 all the houses on King's Bay were moved to the new and present site on Queen's Bay. In 1967 a Nursing Station was built, though it was not until 1971 that a resident nurse was added. In 1969 a full-time administrator was appointed to Holman Island. In the summer of 1972 the people of Holman Island put together their new Community Hall with volunteer labour.

ECONOMY

Many of the Holman Island Eskimos are still active in sealing, fishing, trapping, and hunting. June to October is a period of intensive sealing. In mid-July there is a run of Arctic char along the coast. After freeze-up some residents travel to Kuujua River to fish. Traplines are set in early November. Winter is the period of intensive trapping, mostly of white fox. Caribou are hunted while the trapper is "out on his line", and seals may be hunted between trapline visits. In summer there are many signs of these activities in the settlement. A visitor will see lots of fish hung out to dry, seal-skins stretched to dry in the sun, pieces of stored caribou meat, dog teams, skidoos, and qamutiiks (Eskimo sleds) waiting for use.

The people supplement traditional economic activities with casual wage employment. Some people hold full-time jobs in the settlement--with the Government of the N. W. T., in municipal and janitorial services, as assistant school teachers, and as employees of the Hudson's Bay store. In addition, seasonal construction projects offer opportunities for wage earning, and many people are actively involved in the Holman Eskimo Co-operative, either in art and handicrafts production or in running the Transient Centre and Post Office. The Co-op is extremely efficient and successful, and is noted especially for its excellent sealskin work.

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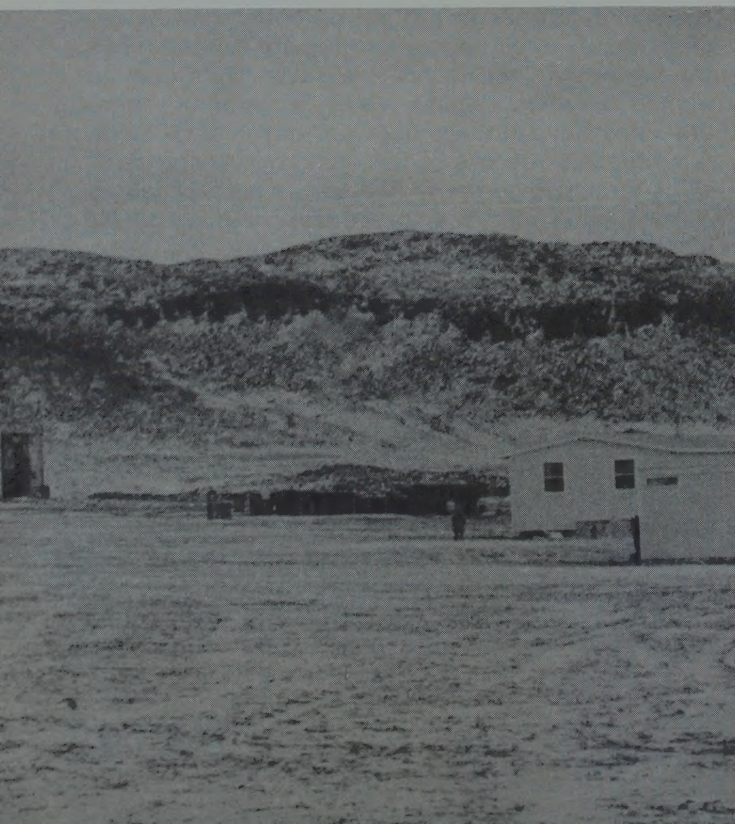
TRANSPORTATION

Holman Island has a 4,000' by 100' gravel airstrip which is maintained by the Government of the Northwest Territories. In winter an ice strip is used. A DC-3 is the maximum aircraft possible on the gravel strip, while the ice can take a Hercules. Northward Aviation has scheduled flights to Holman Island three times a week. On Fridays a Northward DC-3 leaves Inuvik for Holman Island and Yellowknife then makes the return trip on Saturdays. On Wednesdays a Northward Twin Otter makes the round trip from Yellowknife to Holman Island and back.

Main resupply is by annual sea lift, usually in August. Barges from Hay River carry supplies down the Mackenzie River to Tuktoyaktuk, and from there they are redistributed to points along the Arctic Coast.

COMMUNICATIONS

Mail is picked up and delivered twice a week by the Northward "sched" from Yellowknife. The Hudson's Bay Company operates a radio-telephone in the settlement and sends out telegrams. Video tape is sometimes used in the settlement.



ACCOMMODATIONS

The Co-op at Holman Island operates a two-room Transient Centre with cooking facilities and a maximum capacity of six persons.

MUNICIPAL SERVICES

Water is delivered to houses under private contract at a rate of four cents per gallon. Garbage and sewage are also picked up under private contract. Electricity is provided by N.C.P.C. at a rate of twelve cents per kwh.

HEALTH SERVICES

Holman Island has a three-bed Nursing Station run by one nurse. A doctor from Cambridge Bay makes monthly visits to the settlement, and a dentist visits at least once a year. The Nursing Station holds two general clinics per week.

EDUCATION

The school at Holman Island employs three teachers and two teacher assistants. Grades one through six are taught in the three classrooms. Enrollment for 1972 was approximately 65 pupils



STORES

Hudson's Bay Company - General store, fur trade. Co-op Handicrafts, sealskin tapestries, textile and sealskin prints, garments.

CHURCHES

The Anglican and Roman Catholic religions are represented in Holman Island. The R.C. "Christ the King" mission is run by a resident priest, who is very active in community affairs and is chairman of the Co-operative. The Anglican "Church of the Resurrection" is run by a lay assistant.

RECREATION

Holman Island residents are in the process of putting up their brand new Community Hall with a capacity for 300 persons. Films are shown in the settlement twice a week and dances are held occasionally. Volleyball is another favored community activity. Of course environment lends itself to hiking, camping and other outdoor activities.

ODDS AND ENDS

In July of 1972 Holman Island's population totalled 234 - 223 Eskimo and 11 white.

Holman Island elected its first Community Council in 1973.

The Bay is open daily Monday through Friday from 9:00 to 5:00. The Co-op is open daily Monday through Friday 9:30 to 5:00.

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AUTHOR

Holman Island, N.W.T.: information.

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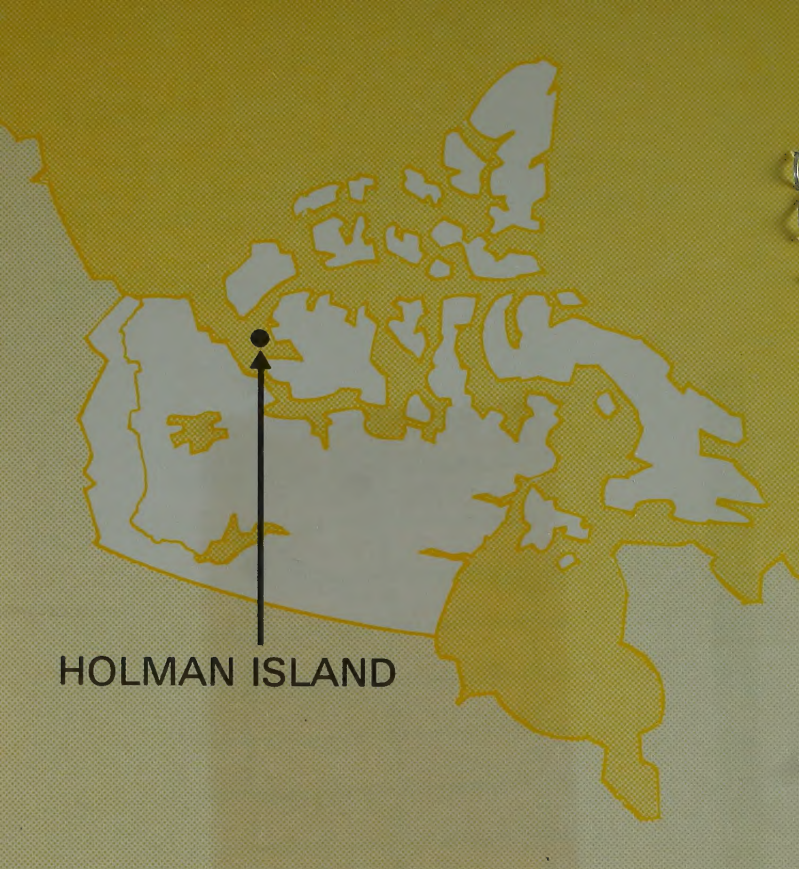
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A map of the Northwest Territories of Canada, showing the coastline and major islands. An arrow points from the text 'HOLMAN ISLAND' to a specific location on the western coast of the mainland.

HOLMAN ISLAND

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES GENERAL INFORMATION

1,304,903 square miles, being 33.9 percent of the area of Canada.

Mainland area	730,266 square miles
Freshwater area	51,465 square miles
Offshore Islands area	523,172 square miles

Coastline length — approximately 9,500 miles.

Highway system — 841 miles.

Population — 1971 - 35,526: 1966 - 28,128

Business Volume 1970 — approximately \$215,000,000

Value of mineral production included above — \$124,000,000

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